Mills
Pam
Comity & Fed
JAN 24 1957

Committee on Research
in Foreign Missions
February 20, 1952

MISSIONARY RESEARCH LIBRARY

The "United Board"

W. P. Mills

The closing sentence of a paper by Dr. R. P. Beaver, entitled "The Mission Boards and Cooperation", says that "the Committee on Research in Foreign Missions will make a study of the 'united board'."[1] This paper is an effort in that direction

But first, some explanation seems needed. Why study the seemingly obvious? The word "board" is a common term in missionary parlance, as happily the word "united" also is, and indeed the combination of the two, as in the phrase "united board" or boards, is frequently upon our lips. Why then should the term "united board" be singled out for special study? And the query gains nothing in clarity, but rather the reverse, when one adds that no particular board, no "United Board" for this or that, is the special subject of this paper.

A hint as to the necessary explanation of the meaning and function of the term, now before us for consideration, may perhaps be found in an analysis of missionary cooperation. C. H. Fahs in his "Conspectus of Cooperative Missionary Enterprises" discusses this point and says that cooperation is of two kinds, consultative and institutional. The former "results from the felt needs of missionary and other Christian workers to come together for mutual counsel and for spiritual encouragement. In general, conference is the first expression of the cooperative spirit and precedes even the formulation of comity principles and certainly it comes before institutional union enterprise. It persists, after the development of these later types of cooperation, and tends to take on coordinating functions in the furtherance of an ever-expanding larger strategy."[2] Exemplifying the consultative type of cooperation is the International Missionary Council and its thirty-two[3] constituent member groups, while the institutional type is to be found primarily among the many schools and hospitals throughout the world maintained by two or more boards or societies.[4]

How carefully the principles and practice underlying missionary cooperation have been worked out during the last sixty years will be seen from the following extracts taken from the By-Laws of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.[5] These By-Laws are largely based upon the experience of the former Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

Preamble

> Organized missionary cooperation in North America began with the establishment of the Foreign Missions Conference in 1893. The Division of Foreign Missions succeeding to the responsibilities of the Conference in 1950, is the developing instrument of that cooperation, dedicated to the spread of the Christian evangel throughout the whole world.

* * * * * * *

1. Beaver, Aim III,ii b. Paper 2, page 3.
2. Conspectus of Cooperative Missionary Enterprises, IMC New York 1935 p. 6.
3. As listed in the International Review of Missions, January, 1952.
4. Conspectus, etc. of cit. pp. 111, 199, 227.
5. Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, Foreign Missions Conference. Nov. 27-29. pp.164-165.

Article II. Purpose and Functions. The functions of the Division are:

2. (a) To provide for conferences of representatives of boards for consultation and for the presentation and discussion of topics concerning their work
   (b) To provide for the study and investigation of missionary problems
   (c) To foster and promote a science of missions
   (d) To perform specific tasks, including any requested by the Council, as agreed upon by the boards through their representatives
   (e) To facilitate cooperation by two or more boards in any foreign missionary endeavor in which they may desire united action

* * * * * *

4. The Division recognises the complete administrative autonomy of all boards and their right to determine the form and extent of their cooperation within the Division. The Division being a purely voluntary association of boards, neither it nor any of its parts has authority to commit boards to any position, policy or course of action, except as such boards may request or authorize the Division or other unit so to act, and then only within the bounds of such request or authority.

* * * * * * *

6. It is not within the scope of the Division to consider questions of ecclesiastical faith and order which represent denominational differences.

Upon the foregoing constitutional basis there has been erected through the years, as new needs, problems and opportunities have arisen, the following Committee structure.[6] We shall try to present this as simply as possible:

1. The Executive Board
   (In this connection it is both interesting and important to recall the slow and gradual development of the "Committee of Reference and Counsel of the Foreign Missions Conference", now the Executive Board. It was not formed until 1907, fourteen years after the formation of the Conference itself.)[7]
2. Representative Area Committees
   a. Africa
   b. China
   c. India, Pakistan and Ceylon
   d. Japan
   e. Korea
   f. Committee on Cooperation in Latin America
   g. Near East
   h. Philippines
   i. Southeast Asia
   j. American Section of International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa
   k. Sub-Committee on Okinawa
   l. Far Eastern Joint Office, comprising China, Japan, Korea, Philippines and Southeast Asia.
   m. Joint Office of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, and the Near East
3. Representative Functional Committees
   a. Associated Mission Medical Office
   b. Christian Medical Council for Overseas Work
   c. Christian Religious Education Overseas Committee

---

6. Fifty-Seventh Annual Report op. cit. pp. 144 - 155.
7. See Conspectus, op. cit. pp. 45 -46.

d. Radio, Visual Education and Mass Communication Committee
e. Rural Missions Cooperating Committee
f. Treasurers Committee
g. Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature

4. Standing Committees
   a. Committee on Arrangements for the Annual Meeting
   b. Christian Missions and the Problem of Communism
   c. Committee on Cooperation with the Churches of Europe
   d. Executive Committee (which shall have a Sub-Committee on Executive Staff)
   e. Committee on Interchange of Christian Leadership
   f. Missionary Personnel Committee
   g. Nominating Committee
   h. Public Relations Committee
   i. Committee on Relief and Reconstruction Services
   j. Research Committee (which shall also represent the Division in the Joint Committee on the Missionary Research Library)
   k. Committee on Special Program and Funds
5. Special Committees
   a. Committee on Strategy
   b. Committee on Technical Cooperation
6. Representatives on Related Organizations
   a. International Missionary Council
   b. North American Council College of Chinese Studies
   c. John Milton Society
   d. World Council of Christian Education

In addition to the 38 foregoing committees or representative groups, the Division of Foreign Missions is also organically linked by a system of representatives to 19 other units of the National Council as follows:

Broadcasting and Film Commission
Central Department of Church and Economic Life
Central Department of Ecumenical Relations
Central Department of Field Administration
Central Department of Finance
Central Department of Public Relations
Central Department of Publication and Distribution
Central Department of Research and Survey
Department of Church and Economic Life
Department of International Justice and Goodwill
General Board
Department of Racial and Cultural Relations
Joint Department of Religious Liberty
General Department of United Church Men
General Department of United Church Women
Joint Department of American Communities Overseas
Joint Department of Christian Family Life
Joint Department of Evangelism
Joint Department of Stewardship and Benevolence

This makes a total of 57 coordinating groups of one sort or another with which the Division of Foreign Missions has to deal. It is also to be noted that the total above mentioned takes no account of purely intra-staff meetings or consultations, which take place at least twice a month. This summary but serves to underline Dr. Beaver's statement, based on the comments of those most intimately concerned, that

the multiplying of cooperative units, without lessening the burden of denominational demands on executives, exhausts the time and energy of board officers. There is an almost unanimous call for simplification and streamlining of the cooperative organization (the Division of Foreign Missions principally) and for less expensive and less time-consuming processes within the organization."[8] Having now given the necessary background, this paper will proceed to deal directly with the relationship of the so-called "united board" to this situation.

If the charge be here made, as it may well be, that there has been as yet no attempt to define a "united board", the answer should be frankly given that no attempt at formal definition is contemplated. What is sought is rather to show why a "united board" comes into being, how it is formed, what it does, the problems it solves, and those that perchance it gives rise to. Only in this way can the question with which we first began, "Why study the seemingly obvious?" be best answered. Why then does a "united board" come into being? The answer is that it arises in response to the felt needs of individuals, particularly individuals who are already familiar with cooperative arithmetic and who know that one plus one, if they do not make three, at least make something more than two.

The nature of the need also determines normally the nature of the response made. If the need is "for mutual counsel and for spiritual encouragement", you get, as Mr. Fahs has indicated, the consultative type of cooperation, as exemplifies by the International Missionary Council, and the various National Christian Councils.[9] If the need is for "the maintenance of an institution in terms of personnel, equipment or funds", then you get "the formal, institutional kind" of cooperation, as is shown by the many boards serving primary, secondary, and higher schools, hospitals, and other agencies.[10] This is not to say that one type of cooperation necessarily excludes the other. Nor is it to say that the same board may not pass back and forth from one type of cooperation to the other as occasion may demand. It is merely to say that there are these two kinds of cooperation, the consultative and the institutional, that each has its place, and that each rightly used in due measure, strengthens the whole.

If the answer to the question as to <u>why</u> a united board is formed is, as we have seen, relatively simple, the answer as to <u>how</u> it is formed is much more complex. The variety of connections between boards and societies is legion, and the threads that bind them together move readily back and forth, where permitted, across both political and ecclesiastical boundaries. The following figures, furnished by the staff of the Far Eastern Joint Office of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council, give a good idea of the tapestry that is thus woven.[11] The Joint Office represents the following Area Committees and through them their Boards.[12]

Areas	Committees
China	44
Japan	29 (including the Interboard Committee of 10 Boards)

8. Beaver op. cit. Aim III, ii b. Paper 2, page 2.
9. Conspectus, op. cit. p. 6.
10. Conspectus, op. cit. pp. 111, 199, 227.
11. Courtesy of Rev. Roland M. Cross and Rev. Wallace C. Merwin
12. "The Division represents boards in the sense of possessing through direct representation unique opportunity for knowing the mind and the policies of the several boards "xxxx 12 . Fifty-Seventh Annual Report op. cit. Art. II, 5. p. 165.

Areas	Committees
Okinawa	5 (3 Members and 2 Affiliated)
Korea	9
Philippines	12
Southeast Asia	14

The sum total of the figures given above, 113 does not mean of course that there are that many different boards working in the six areas, for ten of the boards are working in four or more of the areas each, but the total figure does give an idea as to how many "threads there are to the inch" to use a weaver's term. And this is doubly true when one remembers that there is also a "Joint Office" of the Committee on India, Pakistan and Ceylon and the Near East Committee. Also one can imagine, though one cannot easily count, how rich is the interlacing pattern of the 57 coordinating units with which the Division of Foreign Missions has direct connections.

In the next place, what does a "united board" do? A wide variety of things naturally, as might be expected from the far-reaching and comprehensive character of missionary endeavor. Especially in the field of Christian higher education have united boards, whether so called or not, played a large and useful part, literally in every major area in the world. Typical of this phase of effort was the work of the United Board for the Christian Colleges in China, which even though it has had to adjust its program because of present conditions, is nevertheless still carrying on a significant service to Chinese students and teachers in this country and to Chinese education elsewhere.

In this connection it should be noted that, as a rule, a Christian College does not develop in a day and so the histories of some of the United Boards that have to do with these institutions go back for several decades. It is also interesting to note that "like begets like" and that, as the sending countries begin to develop their united boards, so the receiving countries begin to develop their own consultative and administrative agencies. For instance as the United Board for Christian Colleges in China, developed slowly over thirty years, so in the same way the Chinese Council of Higher Education began to develop in China itself. Of course this development was fortunately never a separatist movement, but always a parallel one, until recent political changes compelled a break in relations.

Thus in the field of church union, a process of gradual development, somewhat similar to that in education, took place. We shall not go into this further now than simply to say that the time-honored By-law of the Foreign Missions Conference that "to consider questions of ecclesiastical faith and order which represent denominational differences" was not within its scope, is still faithfully adhered to by the Division of Foreign Missions.[13]

While we have not given as yet adequate illustration of the variety things that 'a united board' or 'mission' does, nevertheless we wish at this point to consider some of the problems that such a board solves and others to which it gives rise. Incidentally this process will reveal also things other than those mentioned that a united board does or at least attempts to do.

First, Iraq. With an area a little larger than Arizona, and a population, almost wholly Moslem, of between four and five million, Iraq presents a situation that evidently calls for a pooling of resources, hence the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in the United

13. See By-Laws Art. II, 6.

States formed some years ago the United Mission to Mesopotamia. Today the United Mission forms the strongest single unit of Protestant effort in the country. Thus through the medium of a 'united board' the situation has been more effectively met, even though it cannot be claimed that what has been done is adequate.

Second. The United Andean Indian Mission, near Quito, Ecuador is a work in which the Presbyterians North and South, the Evangelical Reformed, and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches cooperate in service to the Indians of the Highland.

The Mission is an incorporated body. Its Program is fourfold: agriculture, education, medical work, and evangelism. When one realizes that the mountain region is badly eroded, one sees the importance of agriculture in their program. The importance of education also stands out when one knows that their school of about sixty boys and girls is the only six grade rural school in Ecuador.[14]

Third. The Board of Christian Work in Santo Domingo has the unique distinction of being "the only mission field in the world where the boards of missions have put on a single united program under an interdenominational organization."[15] The Boards that established this unique agency in December, 1920, were the Home Mission Boards of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and the Foreign Missionary Society of the United Brethren in Christ. Since the Board is now in its thirty-second year, the wisdom of the experiment made in its formation seems to have been significantly tested and proven.

Fourth. The program of the Far Eastern Joint Office of the Division of Foreign Missions for the promotion of cooperation within its vast field, is published as a separate document entitled "Some Statements on Cooperation by Members of the Staff Council."[16] We will not therefore comment here on the work of the Far Eastern Joint Office as a whole, but will simply single out one new cooperative agency about which something should be said. This is the "Interboard." As every one knows, and as we have been again reminded in this paper, the Division of Foreign Missions cannot concern itself "with questions of ecclesiastical faith and order." Therefore the Division cannot promote church union as such. That is a matter left wholly to the churches themselves. But what the division can do, and is furthermore specially empowered to do, is "to facilitate cooperation by two or more boards in any foreign missionary endeavor in which they may desire united action." This is a board mandate and in response to it the "Interboard" has developed.

Of this new development Japan is the most striking example and vividly shows two things. The first is that the boards want to work together, and the second is that they want to cooperate.with the church on the field, especially the United Churches. Thus 10 North American boards function "as a united board in cooperation with the United Church in Japan and on the field as a single mission."[17] The Church in Japan itself represents about two-thirds of the total Protestant membership in the country; It is thus evident that with units as large as these, the "Interboard" on the one hand and the United Church on the other, there must be constant coordination of plans and policies. This in turn gives rise to an "Interboard Committee" on this side of the Pacific and to an "Interboard Field Committee" on the other, so that almost in spite of ourselves committees in mission work seem always to increase and multiply. Nevertheless it is clear that as a means of "getting things done" the new "Interboard Committees" that are springing up, have their place. Witness the present development in Okinawa and also in regard to Indonesia, where the difficult and delicate negotiations necessary in that area are also being entrusted to an Interboard Committee

14. The Presbyterian Church Year Book of Prayer for Missions, 1952, p.4.
15. Elmer T. Clark and Harry C. Spencer. Latin America, U.S.A. p.27.
16. See Rowland M. Cross, Study of the Missionary Obligation of the Church, Aim III.
17. W. C. Merwin; Missionary Obligation, Aim III.